



*Office of the United States Attorney, Ann Birmingham Scheel
District of Arizona*

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Public Affairs
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PASSPORT AND SOCIAL SECURITY FRAUD LEADS TO FEDERAL CHARGES

PHOENIX – On Wednesday, March 21, 2012, a federal grand jury in Phoenix returned a 16-count indictment for conspiracy to commit passport and social security fraud, among other charges, against the following eight individuals:

- Esther Gonzales Guerrero, 45, of Peoria, Ariz.;
- Magdalena Adelisa Gonzales Guerrero, 23, of Peoria, Ariz.;
- Luis Arsenio Chavez Velazquez, a.k.a. Luis Salinas Gonzales, a.k.a. Juan Astorga Martinez, a.k.a. Luis Arcenio Chavez, 37, of Phoenix, Ariz.;
- Aldair Guerra Lopez, a.k.a. Aldair Guerrero Gonzales, 22, of Peoria, Ariz.;
- Teodoro Bueno Figueroa, a.k.a. Teodoro Salinas Gonzales, a.k.a. Guadalupe Figueroa Torrez, a.k.a. Oliver Bueno Figueroa, a.k.a. Edgar Antonio Jimenez, 36, of Phoenix, Ariz.;
- Juan Gabriel Echevarria Mendoza, a.k.a. Juan Gabriel Salinas Gonzales, 36, of Phoenix, Ariz.;
- Sergio Millan Romo, a.k.a. Sergio Millan Salinas, 34, of Phoenix, Ariz.; and
- Armando Garcia Chavez, a.k.a. Armando Garcia Salinas, 50, of Surprise, Ariz.

“A U.S. passport provides our nation’s citizens benefits while travelling abroad, allows them to reenter the United States upon their return home, and serves as an important identification document,” said Acting United States Attorney Ann Birmingham Scheel. “Those who make false statements on passport applications and Social Security forms, to conceal their true identities and to keep their illegal presence in the United States hidden from authorities, diminish the ability of all citizens to utilize and rely on this form of identification. The tremendous cooperation exhibited during this investigation by our federal, state, and local law enforcement partners shows our combined resolve to investigate and prosecute those who fraudulently abuse our immigration and Social Security systems.”

Tom Clinkenbeard, chief of the Arizona Department of Transportation's Office of Special Investigations, said “Document fraud, particularly of the type that involves identification documents, is a precursor to all sorts of illegal activity where someone wants to conceal their true identity or assume the identity of someone else, which has the potential to destroy people's lives.”

“The U.S. passport and visa are two of the most coveted travel documents in the world. There are American citizens and foreign nationals who fraudulently acquire passports and visas to engage in identity theft and other criminal activities. This case demonstrates Diplomatic Security’s commitment to working with our worldwide law enforcement partners to investigate these crimes and help bring these criminals to justice no matter where in the world they may be,” said Wesley A. Weller, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Los Angeles

Field Office of the U.S. Department of State's Diplomatic Security Service (DSS), which has responsibility for Phoenix, Tucson, New Mexico, San Diego, Hawaii and the Pacific territories.

"ICE will use every legal tool at our disposal to help our partners at the U.S. Attorney's Office prosecute those who commit immigration fraud or otherwise exploit our nation's laws for their own personal gain," said Patricia Vroom, ICE chief counsel in Arizona. "This case has been a true team effort and I am proud of the hard work and expertise that our ICE prosecutor has provided in order to ensure these individuals are brought to justice."

"The U.S. Postal Inspection Service is dedicated to protecting the infrastructural integrity of the passport process at our Postal Service passport application offices through law enforcement coordination with the U.S. Department of State's Diplomatic Security Service," said Pete Zegarac, Phoenix Division Inspector in Charge. "We make every effort to prevent fraud against the American public and U.S. Postal Service through the vigorous enforcement of the laws of this country by protecting our nation's mail system from criminal misuse."

The indictment alleges that Esther Gonzales Guerrero and her daughter, Magdalena Adelisa Gonzales Guerrero, are U.S. citizens. It also alleges that their six co-defendants are, or were, illegally present in the United States. The indictment further alleges:

- **Conspiracy and Passport Fraud**
 - The defendants procured and used counterfeit Mexican identification documents, which contained false biographical information, to falsely claim the aliens are the biological children of Esther Gonzales Guerrero or her U.S. citizen parents;
 - The defendants used the fraudulent biographical information in the counterfeit documents to fraudulently apply for, and obtain, U.S. passports under false names; and
 - The aliens falsely provided the Guerreros' address as their own permanent mailing address and requested that their passports be mailed to that location.
- **Conspiracy and Social Security Fraud**
 - Five of the aliens used the fraudulently obtained U.S. passports and the false and counterfeit identification and citizenship documents to apply for, and obtain, Social Security cards.
- **Conspiracy to Harbor Illegal Aliens**
 - Esther Gonzales Guerrero and Magdalena Adelisa Gonzales Guerrero conspired to conceal, harbor, and shield from detection their alien co-defendants.
- **Reentry of Removed Alien**
 - Three of the aliens were found in Phoenix after having previously been denied admission, excluded, deported, or removed from the United States; and
 - None of the aliens had legal authorization to reenter the United States.

A conviction for passport fraud carries a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison, a \$250,000 fine, or both. A conviction for social security fraud carries a maximum penalty of 5 years in prison, a \$250,000 fine, or both. In determining an actual sentence, Judge Campbell will consult the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges. Judge Campbell, however, is not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence.

An indictment is simply a method by which a person is charged with criminal activity and raises no inference of guilt. An individual is presumed innocent until competent evidence is presented to a jury that establishes guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

The joint, international, investigation preceding the indictment was initiated by the Arizona Department of Transportation's Office of the Inspector General. The cooperative investigative effort included contributions from ADOT-OIG detectives; DSS Special Agents both in the Phoenix Resident Office and posted at U.S.

Consulates in the Mexican cities of Hermosillo, Nogales, and Ciudad Juarez, who worked with Mexican government officials in those cities; federal law enforcement agents with the Social Security Administration, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) - Homeland Security Investigations, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, and the U.S. Marshals Service; detectives with the Arizona Department of Economic Security - Office of Special Investigations, and officers with the Arizona Department of Public Safety and the Phoenix Police Department.

The prosecution is being handled by Mark S. Kokanovich, Assistant U.S. Attorney, and Ian Simons, Special Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona, Phoenix.

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